

NEWS RELEASE



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MORE ARRESTS ON CHARGES OF FEDERAL FEMA FRAUD MADE IN SHREVEPORT

Shreveport, Louisiana . . . Two individuals have been arrested for claiming to be Hurricane Katrina victims in order to fraudulently obtain FEMA relief funds, United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced. This brings the total number of those arrested in the Western District of Louisiana on federal FEMA fraud charges since Hurricane Katrina to four.

“Our office is investigating many other fraud cases related to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. These investigations involve various federal programs, including theft of FEMA funds,” U.S. Attorney Washington said. “The clear message is that those who attempt to fraudulently obtain FEMA relief money will be quickly apprehended and prosecuted.”

YOLANDA TOLIVER a/k/a Yolanda Brown, age 46, of Minden, Louisiana, has been charged with theft of federal funds and mail fraud. Relief officials received a registration request on the FEMA Disaster Assistance registration website from TOLIVER claiming that her primary residence and personal belongings in New Orleans, Louisiana had been destroyed by Hurricane

Katrina. Based on the registration, FEMA mailed TOLIVER a check in the amount of \$2,000 for emergency food, shelter, clothing and medical assistance.

In a separate case, EUGENIA JONES, age 53, of Elm Grove, Louisiana, has been charged with theft of federal funds and wire fraud. JONES submitted a registration request on the FEMA Disaster Assistance tele-registration line. JONES told FEMA officials that her primary residence in Harahan, Louisiana, had been destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. JONES received a \$2,000 check from FEMA for emergency food, shelter, clothing and medical assistance which was directly deposited into her bank account.

A follow-up investigation by federal and parish authorities revealed that neither TOLIVER nor JONES were from the New Orleans area, nor did they lose their home and belongings in Hurricane Katrina.

TOLIVER and JAMES made their initial appearances before United States Magistrate Judge Mark L. Hornsby in U.S. District Court on October 4, 2005. A detention hearing for TOLIVER has been scheduled for October 7, 2005 at 2:00 p.m. JONES was released on bond.

If convicted, both defendants face a maximum of 10 years in prison on the charge of theft, 20 years on the charges of mail and wire fraud, and a \$250,000 fine.

In September 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, designed to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft, procurement fraud and insurance fraud. The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division, includes members from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the Postal Inspector's Office, the Executive

Office of the United States Attorneys, and United States Attorney Offices, among others.

An indictment is merely an accusation and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. Defendants are entitled to a presumption of innocence under the law, and the government has the burden of proving every element of the charges beyond a reasonable doubt.

Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statute. United States Sentencing Guidelines established by the United States Congress and the United States Sentencing Commission are only used as guidelines by the judge in determining the appropriate sentence. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

These arrests were the result of a joint investigation by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Postal Inspector, and the Webster Parish Sheriff's Office. These cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Alexander Van Hook.

For further information, please contact United States Attorney Donald W. Washington at 337-262-6618 or First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Flanagan at 318-676-3600.

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